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Probe or Charade?

A resolution passed by the House Wednesday would summon David Chandler, Life magazine correspondent, and "others" to testify before the Legislature as a committee of the whole about allegations of Mafia influence in Louisiana government.

Mr. Chandler is principal author of the Life report of April 10 which concluded that Carlos Marcello wields a predominant influence in Louisiana government and causes the state to lose millions of dollars in uncollected taxes through Mafia influence in the state Department of Revenue.

As we said in an editorial yesterday, we believe the best prospect for a thorough, in-depth legislative investigation is through a standing committee made up of legislators and members of the business and civic communities. Such a committee, as proposed by Sen. William J. Guste Jr. of New Orleans and Sen. Jules Mollere of Jefferson Parish, should have the power of subpoena with all witnesses under oath.

The primary intent of the committee-of-the-whole resolution appears to be to discredit the Life magazine report as quickly as possible rather than to seriously investigate the allegations. For instance, one of the resolution's authors, Rep. Cleveland J. Marcel of Houma, went on record Wednesday thusly: "Let's see if Mr. Chandler has something or if this is a mere smear campaign, *which I think it is.*" Rep. Marcel has declared his prejudice, at least where the Life reporter is concerned.

But what of the "others" mentioned in the House resolution?

Are they to include the governor, Carlos Marcello, Ashton Mouton, director of the Department of Revenue; Emmett Batson, the department's chief attorney; C. H. "Sammy" Downs, director of the Department of Public Works; Leon Gary, director of the Highway Department; all of whom were mentioned in the Life article?

If the Legislature is indeed intent upon a fair and thorough investigation should not W. W. McDougall, commissioner of administration; Gen. David Wade, state adjutant general; and William Dent, director of the Department of Public Safety, be likewise subpoenaed to testify under oath? These are the men, all respected state officials, who conducted the administration's investigation. What, also, of the charge, endorsed by both the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, and the Public Affairs Research Council that the state revenue department is "subsidizing operators of illegal gambling-type pinball machines to the tune of $100,000 a year?"

Should not representatives of these two respected state groups also be called?